

Stuck in Elevator No. 13 With LBJ

Snafus Bedevil McNamara Farewell

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The Pentagon's grey walls nearly blushed pink yesterday as Defense Secretary Robert S. McNamara retired after seven years, bedecked with honors and bedeviled by snafus.

For 12 minutes McNamara and his boss, President Johnson, were trapped in a balky elevator—No. 13—on their way to a lovingly planned ceremony for the superefficient Secretary.

When they finally got there, the wet and cold

troops and dignitaries heard barely a word that was said because of jet noise from Washington National Airport and the breakdown of the Army's public address system.

Besides, the rain was so bad the Air Force and Navy had to scrub a flypast of 20 hotshot planes, including the F-111 fighter-bomber that has so far been flown in combat only against Sen. John L. McClellan (D-Ark.) of the Senate Permanent Investigations Subcommittee.

But there was no mistak-

ing the warmth of the highest-level sendoff, a tribute that was matched at the rank-and-file level by hundreds of Pentagon staffers as McNamara returned to his office—by the staircase—after the 20-minute ceremony.

It was the second farewell ceremony for McNamara in two days. Yesterday on the Pentagon's grounds he was presented the Distinguished Service Medal, highest award for a civilian, for his 2585 days as defense chief.

The citation read by Deputy Secretary of Defense

Paul R. Nitze said his service ranks his name with that of two "great predecessors in this century, Henry L. Stimson and George C. Marshall."

A day earlier at the White House the normally articulate Secretary was so choked with emotion that he could hardly respond when the President presented him the Medal of Freedom.

McNamara's departure tended to overshadow those of two other cabinet officers yesterday: Commerce Secretary Alexander B. Trow-

See McNAMARA, A5, Col. 1

bridge, troubled by poor health, and Health, Education and Welfare Secretary John W. Gardner, reportedly troubled with cutbacks in funds for the Administration's domestic programs.

McNamara's difficulties yesterday began almost exactly at noon in the Pentagon's garage, where he greeted the President and began escorting him to the river entrance one floor above for the ceremony. Three-quarters of an hour earlier, lowering skies had forced a cancellation of the flypast and a steady rain had begun.

The President, McNamara and 11 other persons boarded the 15-person elevator for the one-floor ride. It was 12 minutes and three floors later before they got off.

For some reason the elevator, operated by Army Master Sgt. Clifford Potter, 37, of Syracuse, N.Y., got stuck between the first and second floors. He struggled with the mechanism, and the elevator overshot twice, before jolting to a stop two feet below the fourth floor.

Meanwhile an Air Force colonel sprinted up and down a nearby stairway, occasionally calling out: "They're stuck!"

On the first floor the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Gen. Earle G. Wheeler, waited impatiently.

Inside, Clint Hill of the Secret Service detachment, equipped with a walkie-

talkie, maintained contact with persons outside. There was also a telephone in the elevator in case of need.

"This is what's wrong with there being 29 days in February," McNamara quipped to the President, who cracked back:

"I never knew it took so long to get to the top of the Pentagon."

A trapdoor in the elevator ceiling was opened for ventilation. Finally someone pried open the elevator doors, and the party clambered out and walked downstairs.

The President led the group onto the Pentagon

steps, where he was prevailed upon to don a topcoat and a hat although McNamara and Nitze went bareheaded and coatless, and Wheeler wore no greatcoat over his uniform.

While a U.S. Army band thumped away at "Hail To The Chief" the foursome strode through the rain to the podium for the inspection of the all-service guard of honor, the award ceremony and the brief speeches.

Occasionally snatches of the speeches were heard as the public address system came on fitfully.

In his remarks Mr. Johnson said:

"I have heard this place here at the Pentagon referred to as the puzzle pal-

ace. Bob McNamara may be the only man who ever found the solution to the puzzle, and he is taking it with him.

"But whatever it's called, it's one of the most important buildings on this earth. I am sorry that this is so, but until men and nations are content to live with one another in peace, it will be so."

After the ceremony the party strode back toward the Pentagon, where the President's limousine was waiting. He turned, shook hands warmly with McNamara, and said:

"Thanks a lot, Bob."

"Thank you, Mr. President," McNamara replied.

The President drove off, and McNamara and Wheeler and Nitze walked toward the Pentagon entrance, where shouts and applause began welling up from the jammed doorway. They continued inside the building as McNamara, grinning and waving, and with his glasses still spotted with rain, walked upstairs.

He walked into his suite offices where a reception table could be seen laden with food. One of the first to walk into the private reception was his successor, Clark M. Clifford, who is to be sworn in today as Defense Secretary.